

From: Keith
To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I believe Microsoft is the biggest and most abusive monopoly in history.

At a time when *information* drives our economy, we, as business and personal computer consumers, need choices in the tools we use to manage information.

Unfortunately, the only real choices we have are flavors from the same monopoly. Microsoft has worked to squash competition, most noticeably in their monopolistic crushing of Netscape. MS did not really need to integrate their browser into their operating system and they certainly did not need to give it away. They give very little away. I believe they realized that browsers, because of the way plug-in programs could be integrated, had the potential of becoming an operating system within an operating system. There is no reason that browser plug-ins could not be developed to handle most routine user requirements. Hence, they crush that competition.

Within their own product lines their behavior is that of a monopoly. Take MS Works. It is probably the most simplistic software suite available today. If we use the automotive industry as an analogy, it would be a Yugo. If General Motors were a monopoly, they could offer only a Yugo and a Buick. Consumers would realize the all-too-obvious limitations of the Yugo (MS Works) and pay through the nose for the Buick (MS Office).

Additionally, MS monopoly behavior has produced unreliable operating systems with huge security holes. They have no reason to care because there is no competition.

The DoJ should do the same thing to Microsoft that they did to "Ma Bell" and split the company into a minimum of five corporations. At least "Ma Bell" gave us the best phone system in the world. The only thing of worldwide note that Microsoft has produced is producing one of the world's richest men.

Eventually, some parts of the split MS company might re-merge, just as some of the Bell units have. But, in the meantime, we would have a period when investors could bring us truly competing companies, just as happened in the telecommunications industry. Today, no one in their right mind would spend anything to try to compete with the world's biggest monopoly. No one! Without a breathing space created by a 5-way split up, we are doomed to endure high prices and mediocre products, the hallmarks of a monopoly. While I am a firm free-market advocate, American consumers do deserve protection from certain levels of monopoly. If Microsoft does not meet that threshold, no company ever will.

Sincerely,
Keith Ryan
Consultant